

MOBILISE

COCKPIT
SPECIAL EDITION

Femcare in India 2024

CONVERSATIONS
TRENDS 2023-2024

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Executive Summary

The state of menstrual health in India is vital for the well-being of women and girls, impacting their physical, mental, and social health. Poor menstrual health can result in infections, reproductive tract diseases, and other health issues. Inadequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM) also contributes to school absenteeism, lower academic performance, and higher dropout rates among adolescent girls, perpetuating gender inequality in education. The stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation exacerbate these problems, leading to social exclusion and discrimination. Improved menstrual health outcomes can empower women and girls, increasing their participation in education and the workforce and contributing to broader societal development. Addressing menstrual health is fundamental in achieving the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to health, education, gender equality, and clean water and sanitation**. Thus, efforts being made to enhance menstrual health outcomes in India are not only critical for individual health but also a pivotal step towards achieving gender equality.

Over the past few years, there has been notable progress in improving menstrual health for women in India, thanks to the concerted efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots initiatives.

In November 2023, the government introduced the draft national-level menstrual hygiene policy designed to eradicate the taboo associated with menstruation, ensure access to menstrual products and sanitary facilities, empower women and girls, promote health and sustainability, and uphold international commitments to gender equality and women's well-being.



The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) has also played a vital role in emphasizing the importance of sanitation and hygiene, indirectly benefitting menstrual health by providing access to clean and safe toilet facilities. NGOs and grassroots organizations have been pivotal in breaking the silence surrounding menstruation through educational and advocacy programs, resulting in increased awareness, reduced stigma, and improved access to affordable menstrual products.

Innovations such as biodegradable sanitary pads and menstrual cups are gaining popularity, offering sustainable options for managing menstrual hygiene. Despite persisting challenges, the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders are fostering a more supportive environment for women's menstrual health in India, leading to improved health outcomes and greater gender equality.

The report focuses on key topics related to women's health, particularly menstrual health. Subtopics driving online conversations include:

- **Clinical health (covering vaginal health and infections along with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS))**
- **Societal issues**
- **Diet and nutrition**
- **Government policies and initiatives**
- **Technology**

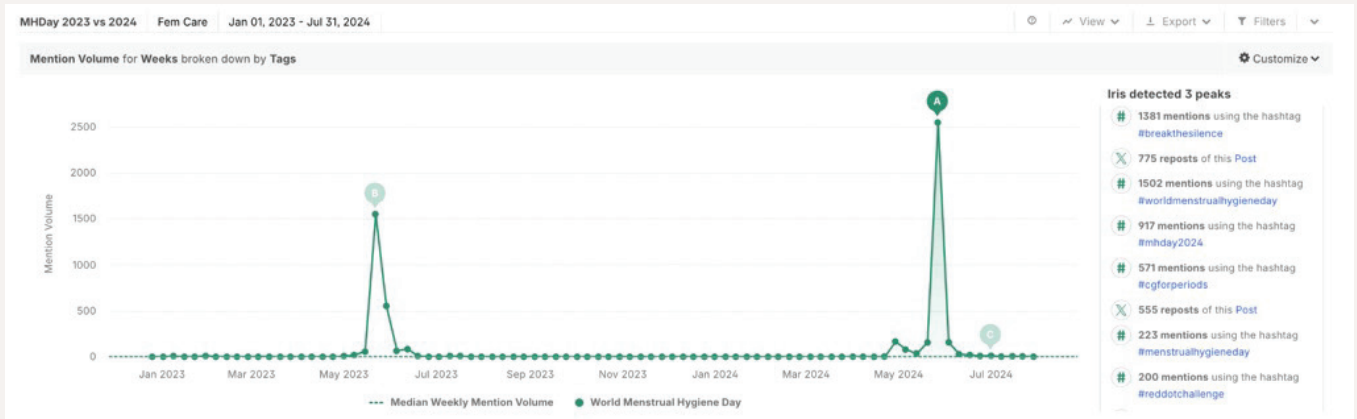
Some of the other topics covered in the report:

- **Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)**
- **Sustainability needs of menstrual products**
- **Developments in femtech**

The study was conducted with data from **January 2023 - July 2024** in the English language across news, blogs, forums and the social media platform 'X'.

World Menstrual Hygiene Day 2024

Every year, World Menstrual Hygiene Day (28th May) serves as a platform to raise awareness and educate individuals about the importance of menstrual hygiene. In 2024, the central theme was **'Period Friendly World'** with a focus on eliminating stigma, increasing access, and ensuring attention to sustainability efforts in the sector.



In 2023, there were approximately 1,700 mentions related to World Menstrual Health Day, whereas in 2024, there were over 2,600 mentions, indicating an increase in conversations on this occasion.

In 2023, some of the key campaigns were #RedDotChallenge (with more than 560 mentions) and #ShushTheHush - Bleed Shamelessly (with more than 104 mentions). The standout theme in 2024 was #PeriodFriendlyWorld, with more than 1,780 mentions.

World Bank India
@WorldBankIndia · Follow

When climate disaster strikes, girls are forced out of schools, and entire communities have to migrate. Building climate resilience can help protect menstruating girls and women and reduce the risk to their health. [#MHD2024](#) [#PeriodFriendlyWorld](#)

[#PeriodFriendlyWorld](#) [#MenstruationBraceletPortraits](#)

Climate change disrupts periods: Droughts dry up water, floods destroy facilities, and limited access to menstrual supplies in emergencies increases the risk of urinary and reproductive tract infections. Without access to these key resources, girls and women cannot manage their menstruation with dignity and safety. Healthy girls, healthy planet.

Jennifer Sara,
Global Director For the World Bank Group's
Climate Change Global Practice

12:00 AM · May 30, 2024

4 · Reply · Copy link

National Health Mission HP
@nhmhimachalp · Follow

Together for a [#PeriodFriendlyIndia](#) and [#PeriodFriendly District - Una, Himachal Pradesh](#).

[#MenstrualHygieneDay](#) [#MHD2024](#)
[#PeriodFriendlyWorld](#)

4:41 PM · May 28, 2024

2 · Reply · Copy link

A study on awareness of menstrual health and hygiene amongst adolescent girls in India noted that around 12% of young girls think menstruation **is a curse** from God or caused by disease, indicating the need for more awareness-based initiatives to be implemented at grassroots levels.

Some conversations highlighted the importance of **menstrual cups** in promoting sustainable and **cost-effective** menstrual hygiene practices. Initiatives like **cup distribution** and educational campaigns aimed to combat taboos and improve menstrual health awareness.

Dinesh Gundu Rao / దినేశ్ గుండురౌ / @dineshgrao

Ensuring menstrual hygiene and empowering women is not just a promise, but a priority for our government. **Nanna Maitri Yojana** is here to provide menstrual health awareness and free menstrual cups.

Happy International Women's Day!

#InternationalWomensDay2024 #NannaMaitri #MaitriYojana #MenstrualHygiene #Hygiene #WomenEmpowerment #HealthForAll

12:34 PM · Mar 8, 2024 · 430 Views

AIIMS Bhubaneswar / @AIIMSBhubaneswr

Dept of CMFM @AIIMSBhubaneswr and #UPHC Nayapalli jointly celebrated #MenstrualHygieneDay & distributed menstrual cup for women.

👉 Join us in the Menstrual Cup Revolution! Empowering women with sustainable solutions.

#MenstrualCupRevolution 🌸👩🩺🩸 @MoHFW_INDIA

1:04 PM · May 28, 2023 · 638 Views

the_hindu (The Hindu) @the_hindu

#THShorts Video | For #WorldMenstrualHygieneDay, Child Rights and You's releases findings from a study on awareness of **menstrual** hygiene and **#health** amongst adolescent **girls** in India <https://t.co/lD5jD3vY9C>

17 Jun

In both formal and informal sectors, a lack of menstrual hygiene conversations and facilities at the workplace often leads to absenteeism and loss of income. According to the **same article**, Radhika Chabria, the founder of Shakti Menstrual Cup, noted that factory workers sometimes take pills to delay their periods due to a lack of proper sanitation facilities in their workplaces.

Companies such as Flipkart Foundation and Reckitt Benkiser have started initiatives such as **Project Udaan** and **#MissionSwachhtaAurPaani** respectively to raise awareness about menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls (and women, if applicable) in rural areas, while breaking down all the taboos surrounding menstruation.


Several key voices, hospitals, educational institutions, ministers, journalists, health care professionals and influencers contributed to the conversations on 'X' on World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

Dr. Bharati Lavekar @LavekarBharati

TEE FOUNDATION Celebrating 6th Anniversary of Tee Foundation's #DigitalSanitaryPadBank.

Menstrual hygiene should be taught to every girl so that she can have a smooth and healthy life during menstruation and otherwise. Happy #MenstrualHygieneDay!

#WorldMenstrualHygieneDay #MenstrualHygieneDay #sanitarypad #periods #periodblood #Breakthetaboo #KhulKeBolo #WeAreCommitted



Narendra Modi and 9 others

8:31 AM · May 28, 2023 · 356 Views

Manjula Aravind Limbavali @MALimbavali

Participated in the event held on the occasion of World Menstrual Hygiene Day at Rangamandira of Nimbekaipur, Mahadevapura Assembly Constituency.

Taluk Panchayat Officers Shri K Manjunath, other officials, staffs, leaders and karyakarthis were present on this occasion.




3:03 PM · May 29, 2023 · 669 Views

DD News @DDNewstive

On #WorldMenstrualHygieneDay, let's break the silence and end the stigma around #menstruation.

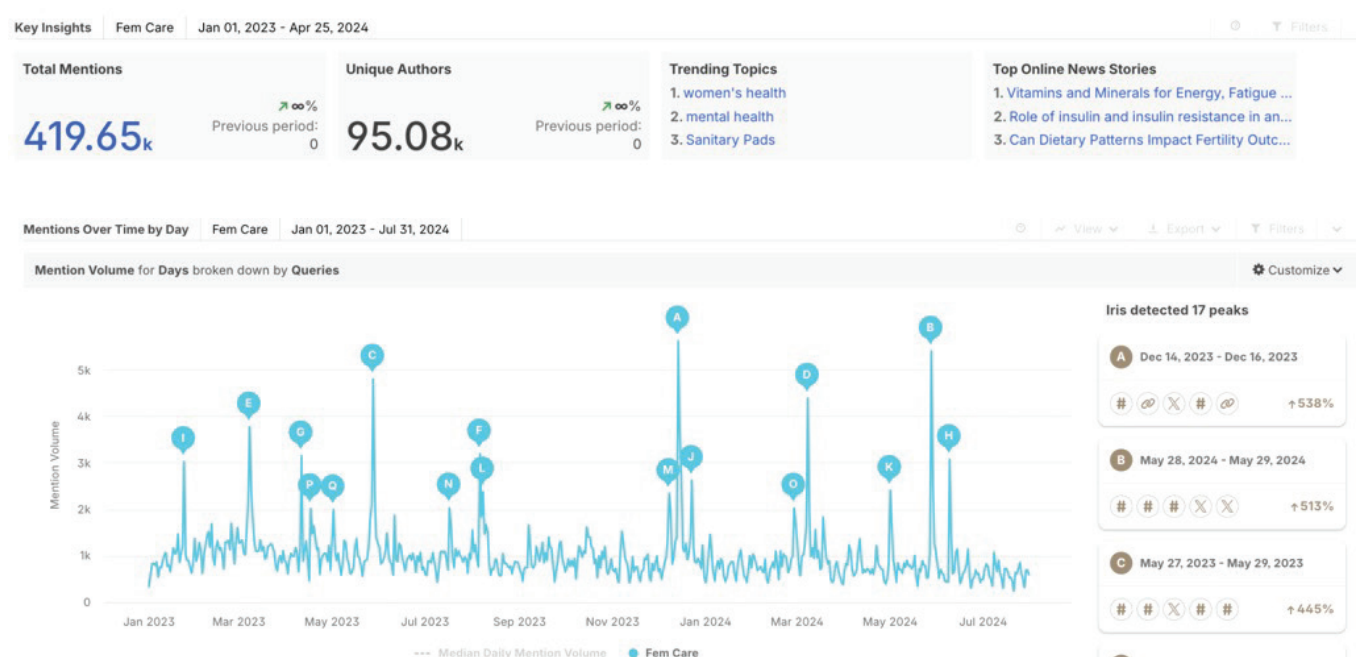
Education, access, and awareness are key to #EmpoweringWomen globally. Together, we can ensure access to menstrual products and education for all.

#BreakTheSilence #ActNow



Last edited 10:02 AM · May 28, 2024 · 3,845 Views

Menstrual Health Conversations in 2023 & 2024 : Key Insights



Conversation Drivers

A. 12th Dec, 2023

1045 mentions around #menstruation in the context of discussion around menstrual leave appeals. Former Minister for the Ministry of Women and Child Development – Smriti Irani, was called out for [opposing menstrual leave](#).

C. 27th May, 2023

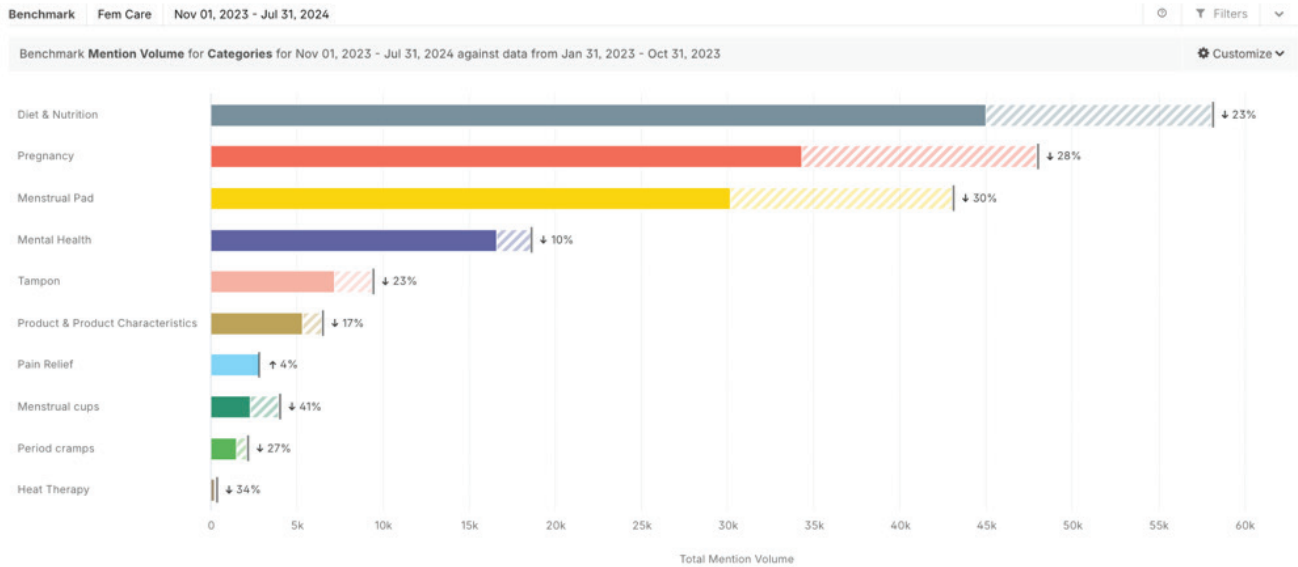
1150 mentions for #MenstrualHygieneDay highlighted the need for awareness and normalization of menstrual hygiene practices. In addition, there were several campaigns #RedDotChallenge, #ShushTheHush – Bleed Shamelessly and #CGForPeriods which highlighted the importance of normalizing period conversations. They also appealed to men to have open conversations around the topic.

D. 8th Mar, 2024

International Women's Day also included discussions about periods. The hashtag #ViksitBharatKiViksitNari highlighted the impact of this government initiative, noting a **57% decrease in anemia** among women aged **15-49 years**.

In recent years, there has been a growing attention to menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) around the world. For instance, the National Health Mission of 2011, promoted menstrual health in adolescent girls in rural areas. In recent years, there has been a significant focus on addressing menstrual health in India through various initiatives and policy changes. Comparisons of tax rates on sanitary pads reveal the impact of governmental policies on affordability and accessibility, while initiatives and schemes aimed at providing menstrual hygiene management solutions, such as [low-cost sanitary pads](#) and awareness campaigns, have gained momentum. Additionally, public restrooms are being upgraded with [sanitary napkin vending machines](#), breastfeeding rooms, and other facilities to enhance women's health and comfort. Former Minister for the Ministry of Women and Child Development – [Smriti Irani](#) has also contributed to the discourse on women's health, making statements and taking actions to support sanitary pad distribution and menstrual hygiene awareness.

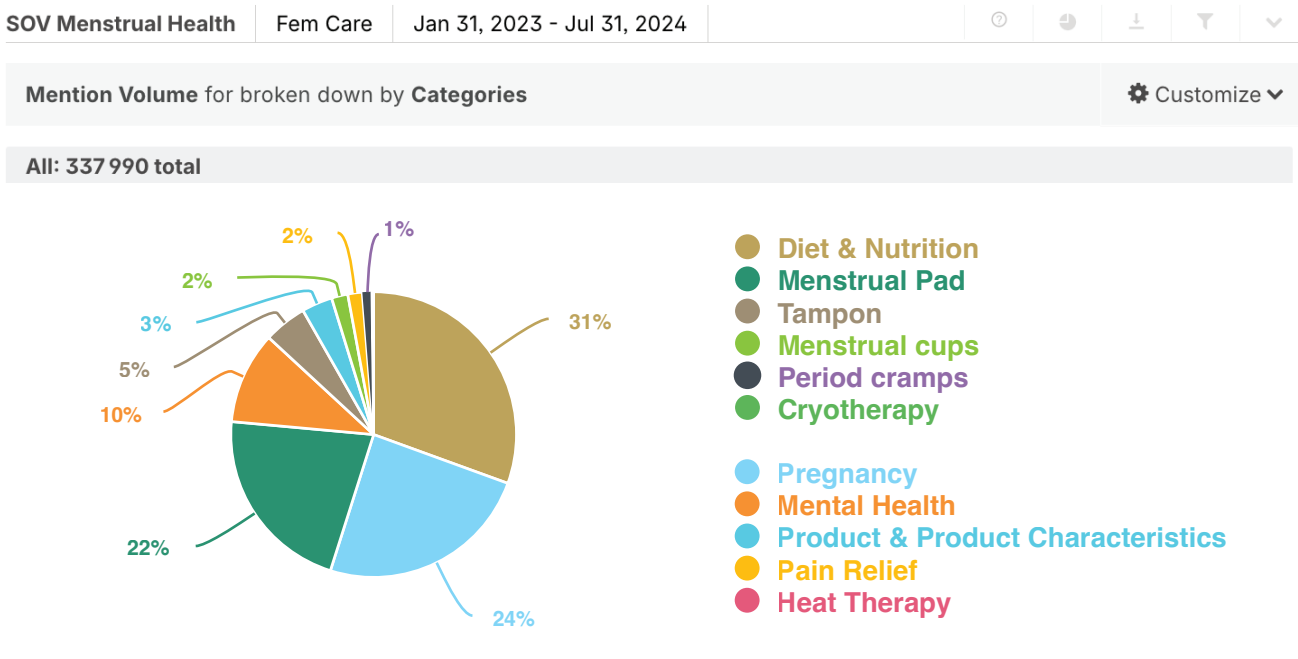
Benchmarking Menstrual Health



To get a better understanding of menstrual health, we explored various themes including Diet and Nutrition, Pregnancy, Menstrual Pads, Mental Health, Tampons, Menstrual Cups, Pain Relief, Period Cramps, Heat Therapy, and Cryotherapy.

In the duration of our study, the highest volume of conversation was around Diet and Nutrition, followed by Pregnancy, Menstrual Pads, and Mental Health.

Notably, when we compared this duration with a similar preceding time period, we found that conversations about Pain Relief and Cryotherapy were the only topics that either retained or gained volume.



Diet & Nutrition

Under diet and nutrition, we have observed conversations focusing on long-term benefits of dietary and [nutritional strategies](#) to alleviate pain and provide relief during periods. Doctors and experts have offered tips on dietary measures and nutrition to [manage PCOS](#). Other mentions highlighted the importance of [vitamin D](#) in the diet. Nutrition plays a crucial role in managing conditions such as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and Polycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOD), and most of the advice focused on this aspect. Experts emphasize the importance of dietary changes, including foods that can help control symptoms, boost mental well-being, and improve fertility. There were also several articles about [post menopausal osteoporosis](#) being a significant challenge for older women.

There was significant interest in [Mediterranean diets](#), particularly regarding their impact on biomarkers of metabolism and inflammation. This was followed by a focus on how these diets affect triglyceride-rich lipoproteins, obesity, and insulin resistance.

Apart from this, several partnerships and initiatives were also highlighted, such as:

Launch of the 'Arogya Mahila' program in Telangana for women's health.

Collaboration between Ayush and WCD ministries to enhance nutritional status through Ayurveda.

State based initiatives such as Odisha Govt's 'Mukhyamantri Sampurna Pushti Yojana', created to promote health outcomes for adolescent girls, pregnant/lactating women, and underprivileged children.

Menstrual Pads

Efforts to [distribute sanitary pads](#), promote mental health, and raise menstrual health awareness have been highlighted in numerous headlines. This efforts also prioritize crucial elements such as the safe disposal of pads, the construction of accessible toilets, and access to educational resources. Several initiatives have focused on [installing vending machines](#), promoting [menstrual cups](#), and ensuring proper menstrual hygiene management.

The lack of information regarding menstrual health in rural India due to [cultural taboos](#) and myths was highlighted. [Initiatives](#) are being introduced to ensure [gender-inclusive](#) menstrual health education, empowering girls, women, and trans individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health.

Women's empowerment is also fostered through employment initiatives focused on female [self-help groups](#), enterprise development, and sustainable solutions.

Apart from this, the conversations were also around:

Stories of young entrepreneurs like [Shipro](#) and [Yash Mane](#) - using sanitary pad distributions to empower women and advocate for gender equality.

Partnerships between Vama Club, the CPWD Officers' Wives Association, and other government organizations have led to the distribution of sanitary pads to women in need.

According to NFHS 5, the percentage of women aged 15-24 using hygienic menstrual protection has risen from 58% in NFHS-4 to 78%. The survey also shows that women with 12 or more years of schooling are more than twice as likely to use hygienic methods compared to those with no schooling, highlighting the importance of education. Additionally, 73% of rural women and 90% of urban women use hygienic menstrual protection.

Methods of Menstrual Protection*		
TYPE OF MENSTRUAL PROTECTION	INDIA	NAGALAND
Cloth	49.6	56.7
Locally Prepared Napkins	15.0	3.5
Sanitary Napkins	64.4	77.7
Tampons	1.7	0.0
Menstrual Cup	0.3	0.2
Other	0.2	0.7
Nothing	0.2	0.0
Percentage Of Woman Using Hygienic Method#	77.6	80.6
<i>*Woman age 19-24 years; total sum may exceed 100% as respondents may report multiple methods; #Locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins, tampons, and menstrual cup are considered to be hygienic methods of protection</i>		
<i>Source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)</i>		

Mental Health

For centuries, menstruation has often been a topic surrounded by silence and stigma, frequently discussed in subdued tones or kept private. In India, where conversations about periods remain taboo in many communities, this lack of open dialogue has had negative consequences such as a direct impact on mental health and confidence amongst women. The taboo surrounding menstruation in India [leaves girls and women](#) feeling isolated and shamed, further affecting mental well-being.

The [stigma continues to prevail](#) impacting mental health as even today In many rural areas, women are still considered untouchables during their menstruation period. Some places believe that evil spirits reside in the body of women during that time.

The [National Menstrual Hygiene Policy](#) marks an important step towards changing the prevailing narrative around menstruation. It recognizes menstruation as a fundamental aspect of women's health and aims to address existing taboos. The policy promotes [open dialogues](#) and menstrual hygiene, contributing to a more informed and understanding society.

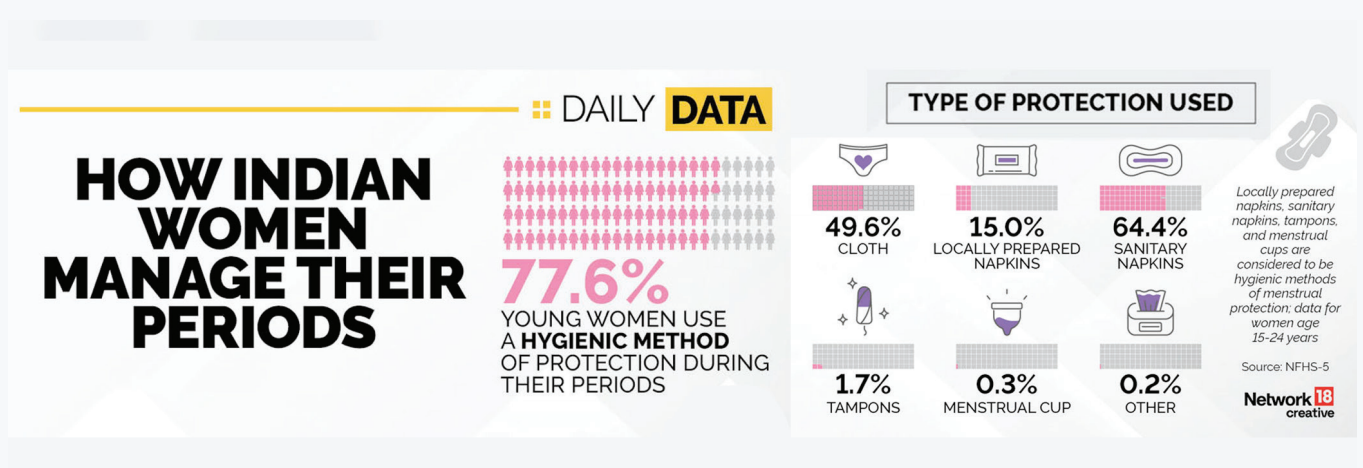
Heat & Cryotherapy

Cryotherapy, infrared treatments, and other biohacks have seen a growing popularity in India. Use of [cryotherapy for immediate treatment](#) of early symptoms of cervical cancer in women aged 26-30 has also emerged.

[Heat therapy](#) has been identified as an effective method to alleviate cramps and period pain.

[Celebrities](#) opened up about their struggles with menstrual health issues and encouraged people to have more conversations and normalize such discussions.

There is an increased focus [from the market on effective and natural pain management methods](#) (Roll on balms, massagers) for women as this segment of the conversations has seen a significant uptick.



Spotlight: Sustainability

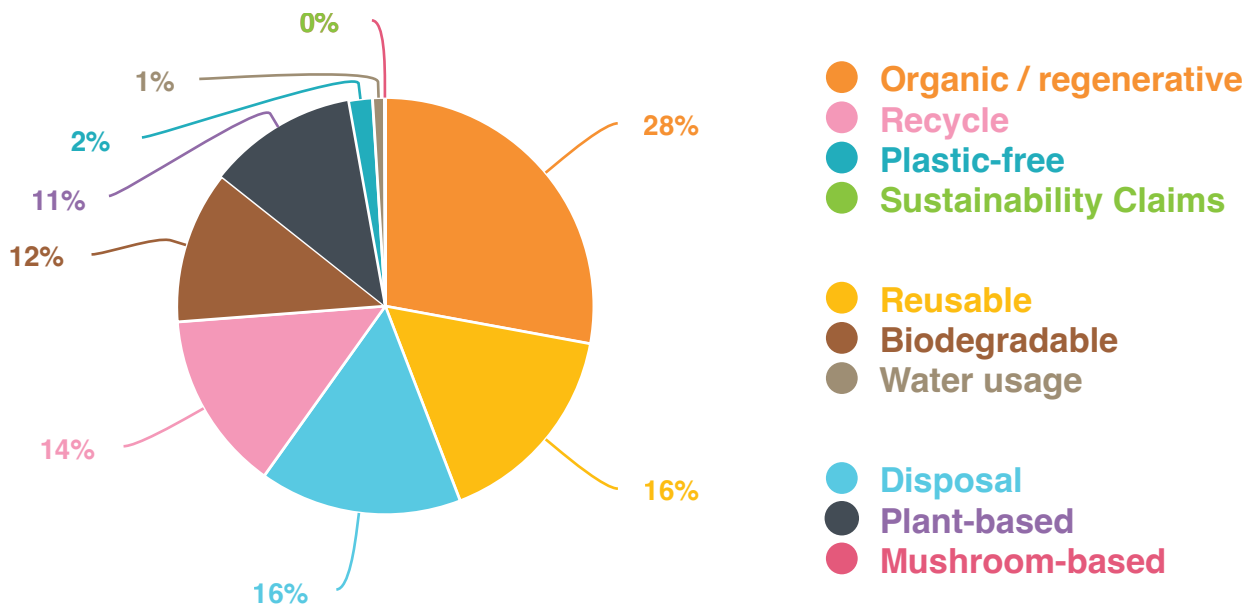
Several important themes have been noted that contributed to the conversations around sustainability including organic, regenerative products, recycling, reusable products, and disposal of pads, to name a few.

28% of the mentions under sustainability have been about the growth of organic products, followed by 16% on reusable cloth pads and products and 15% has been around waste management and disposal of pads.

Mention Volume for broken down by Categories

Customize

All: 32 896 total



In recent years, conversations on sustainability and waste management have been on the rise. Reusable sanitary pads and menstrual cups have leaned heavily on promoting sustainability and comfort. There has been a significant rise in [menstrual cup sensitization](#), emphasizing the [benefits](#) of using it over disposal sanitary napkins with sustainability being a key message.

Similarly, the use of [biodegradable sanitary pads as an alternative to traditional pads](#) has also been covered in many articles. Conversations have highlighted [innovations in safe disposal of products](#). Innovations in sustainable menstrual products are transforming the market, offering more [eco-friendly alternatives](#) to traditional synthetic options. Efforts like [Padcare's sanitary pad recycling initiative](#) aim to reduce issues such as landfill waste. Projects such as [Project Baala](#) and [Green Worms](#) are working towards an inclusive, low-carbon future through sustainable menstrual solutions and circular economy promotion.

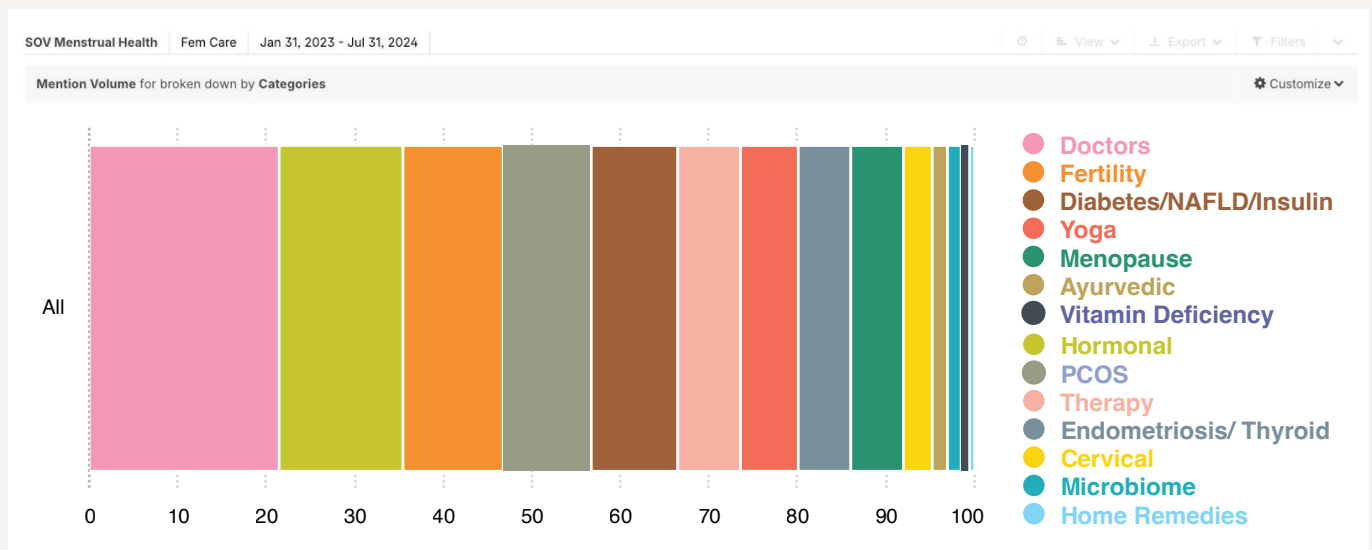
Infrastructure improvements include providing belted sanitary napkins, treating sanitary pads as hazardous waste, and promoting water conservation. The installation of sanitary napkin vending machines and [eco-friendly incinerators](#) highlights the push for improved menstrual hygiene and management. Natural initiatives are making biodegradable and [bamboo cotton sanitary pads](#) more accessible, adding comfort and environmental benefits.

Awareness campaigns have been advocating for plastic-free environments and promoting the use of plastic-free sanitary products. Innovative processes, like eco-friendly dyeing that [reduces water usage](#), contribute to overall sustainability.

Collaborative efforts for responsible [water management](#) further underscore the comprehensive approach needed to address global environmental challenges, making sustainability in menstrual health a critical focus of this report.

Clinical Health

In the context of menstrual health, 59% are related to clinical health. Key topics such as doctors, hormones, fertility, and PCOS have dominated this category of mentions.



In the realm of clinical health for feminine care, the benefits of yoga for women's health, particularly in relation to menstruation and menopause, [hormonal imbalances](#) are gaining widespread recognition.

Fertility, pregnancy, and [ayurvedic tips](#) are also key topics, with articles exploring how diet, exercise, and supplements can enhance fertility, manage conditions like PCOD, and support pregnancy in the presence of issues like endometriosis and thyroid disorders.

Doctors

Awareness and understanding of hormonal changes and medical conditions crucial to [women's health](#) have been promoted to ensure better care. Regular communication with doctors increases the likelihood of early diagnosis of conditions like [endometriosis](#), highlighting the [importance of staying engaged](#) with healthcare providers.

Misdiagnosis of [women's health conditions](#) leading to severe health crises has been reported in several cases.

In remote tribal villages, doctors are conducting comprehensive examinations and treatments for thousands, addressing a range of health conditions. For instance, Kolhan region got its first [maternity](#) waiting home. Similarly, the [Total Health camp initiative](#) is providing healthcare for The Chenchu Tribe in Telangana. Rnisarg Foundation has been [encouraging tribal and rural women](#) to adopt sustainable menstruation practices such as switching to cups.



IASOAKarnataka (IAS Officers' Association, Karnataka) @IASOAKarnataka 15 Mar
Karnataka launches [#Prerna](#) scheme to promote [#menstrual](#) cups in [#Kalaburagi](#), targeting 1.03 lakh M-cup distribution. 880 frontline [#ASHAs](#) & doctors to spread awareness. [@DHFwKA](#) [@Comm_dhfwka](#) [@MoHFW_INDIA](#) [@IASassociation](#) Read More: <https://t.co/yuTnTqSvQb>

MediBuddy - an Indian healthcare services platform reported an increase in doctor consultations [among tech-savvy users](#), a promising sign of these individuals taking charge of their health. Notably, the platform recorded a 98.46% increase in female patients seeking endocrinology consultations, compared to a 56.41% increase among male patients. Considering the link between related conditions, such as increased blood sugar and endometriosis, improving overall health outcomes requires a holistic approach to treatment and diagnosis.

Fertility

Discussions around women's fertility have seen a resurgence, focusing on conditions such as PCOS, hormonal imbalances affecting menstrual cycles and ovulation, and the effects of certain treatments on fertility. Several articles also talk about educating individuals about [fertility awareness](#) methods for better family planning outcomes and reproductive health.

The mentions delve into the relationship between lifestyle choices, such as diet, exercise, and stress management, and their impact on women's fertility. They explore how factors like nutrition, weight management, and hormonal imbalances can affect fertility outcomes. Additionally, discussions on the effects of endometriosis, vaping, and gut health on fertility shed light on the complex interplay between various health aspects and reproductive wellness.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

According to the World Health Organisation, PCOS is the most common cause of anovulation and a [leading cause of infertility](#). Approximately 54% of women surveyed in a study reported suffering from PCOS, making it the [most prevalent menstrual disorder](#). The same study conducted by [Gynoveda](#) shows that 70% of women in India face PCOS or other menstrual health-related issues. One of the key findings indicated that a significant 60% of women in the age group of 25 to 34 suffer from PCOS.

Several ministries including the [Ministry of Ayush](#), healthcare professionals, journalists, and [media articles](#) have spoken about the management of PCOS using dietary changes, lifestyle additions, and [yoga](#) to alleviate the physical and emotional symptoms of the disorder.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting reposted
PIB India
@PIB_India

A study demonstrates the impact of yoga on PCOS, showcasing its potential for managing the condition. By reducing hormone levels, restoring menstrual cycles, improving hirsutism and acne Yoga offers a holistic approach to alleviating the physical and emotional burdens of PCOS.

#YogaForAll #IDY2024

YOGA
IN MANAGING POLYCYSTIC
OVARY SYNDROME **PCOS**

A research suggests that Yoga in PCOS:

- Reduced Anti-Müllerian Hormone, luteinizing hormone, and testosterone levels
- Restored menstrual cycles
- Improved hirsutism and acne
- Regulated oxidative stress, protecting against DNA damage and epigenetic changes

This International Day of Yoga 2024, embrace Yog for Holistic well-being

Ministry of Ayush and 3 others

8:37 PM · Jun 5, 2024 · 9,663 Views

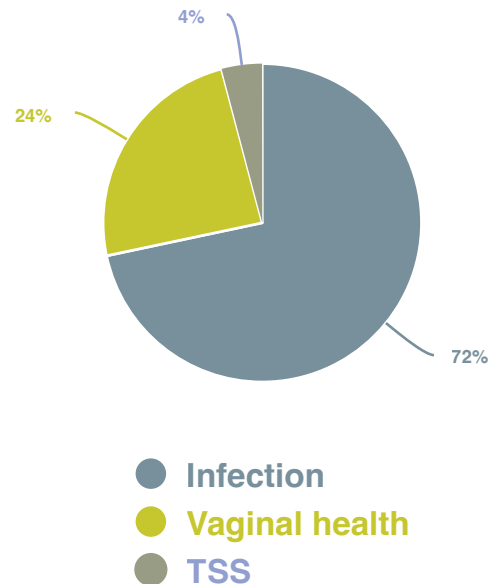
Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)

Toxic Shock Syndrome or TSS as it is commonly known as is a rare, sudden, life-threatening complication of certain bacterial infections. It is most commonly caused by a toxigenic strain of staphylococcus aureus or group A strep (streptococcus pyogenes). We did a deep dive under menstrual health on conversations related to TSS which covered 3% from the overall mentions. The second highest mentions related to TSS were infections which occupied 76% of the conversations.

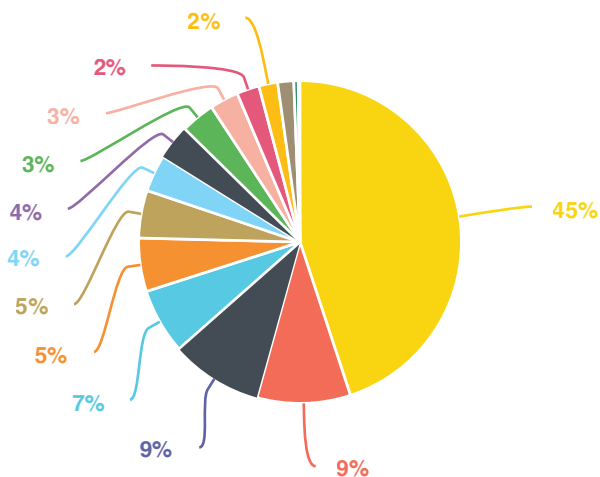
Various headlines discuss the [causes, symptoms, and prevention of vaginal infections](#), highlighting the importance of maintaining vaginal health and hygiene.

[UTIs](#) in women can be exacerbated by menstrual irregularities, pointing to a connection between menstruation and urinary tract infections. Women with high-risk [HPV strains](#) have an increased risk of heart disease, emphasizing the need for further research and vaccination.

[Tampons](#) pose a risk of TSS if not used properly or changed regularly. The benefits and use of [menstrual cups](#) were mentioned multiple times, highlighting their safety and potential to reduce the risks of infections.



Safety



- Plastic
- Bleaching
- PFAS
- Heavy Metals
- Chlorine
- Fragrances & Dyes
- Safety regulations
- Phthalates
- Phenol
- Seed oils
- Pesticide
- Mercury
- Parabens
- Formaldehyde
- Toluene

Approximately 3.9% of the overall mentions contributed in some manner to issues classified as safety-related concerns. The themes here are related to the risks associated with femcare products which come under the purview of consumers today and impact the security and confidence towards products used in the country. These are influenced by reliability, hygiene, comfort, use of plastics, dyes, and fragrances. These issues stack with mentions of plastics, fragrances, and dyes alone contributing to more than 50% of mentions.

Plastics

There is a growing awareness of the environmental impact of menstrual hygiene products, leading to a shift [towards sustainable options](#) like menstrual cups and reusable cloth pads. Many environmentally-conscious consumers are seeking [biodegradable alternatives](#) to traditional sanitary napkins, which are often

made of **synthetic materials** that take hundreds of years to decompose. A study by NGO ARTH (Action Research and Training for Health) stated that total non-biodegradable waste generated from **plastic and polymers** used in menstrual products can be reduced by 99 per cent by use of menstrual cups indicating an increase in conversations around sustainability and reduction of usage of plastic.



A synthetic chemical **Phthalate**, used in everyday items such as pads has been highlighted in several articles as a link to infertility, and hormonal changes in all genders.

Fragrances & Dyes

Avoiding **harsh chemicals** has been indicated as a recommendation for maintaining vaginal health by using gentle, and fragrance-free products. Mentions also include introduction of **PLA-based biodegradable** sanitary pads and awareness around eco-friendly menstrual products.

Safety Regulations

Advocacy groups have been arguing that changes in **abortion pill** regulations jeopardize women's health, nationwide. There have also been several discussions on **abortion restrictions**, following on from the recent reversal of Roe v. Wade arbitration by the Supreme Court in the US. These were widely discussed in Indian media as well.

PFAS

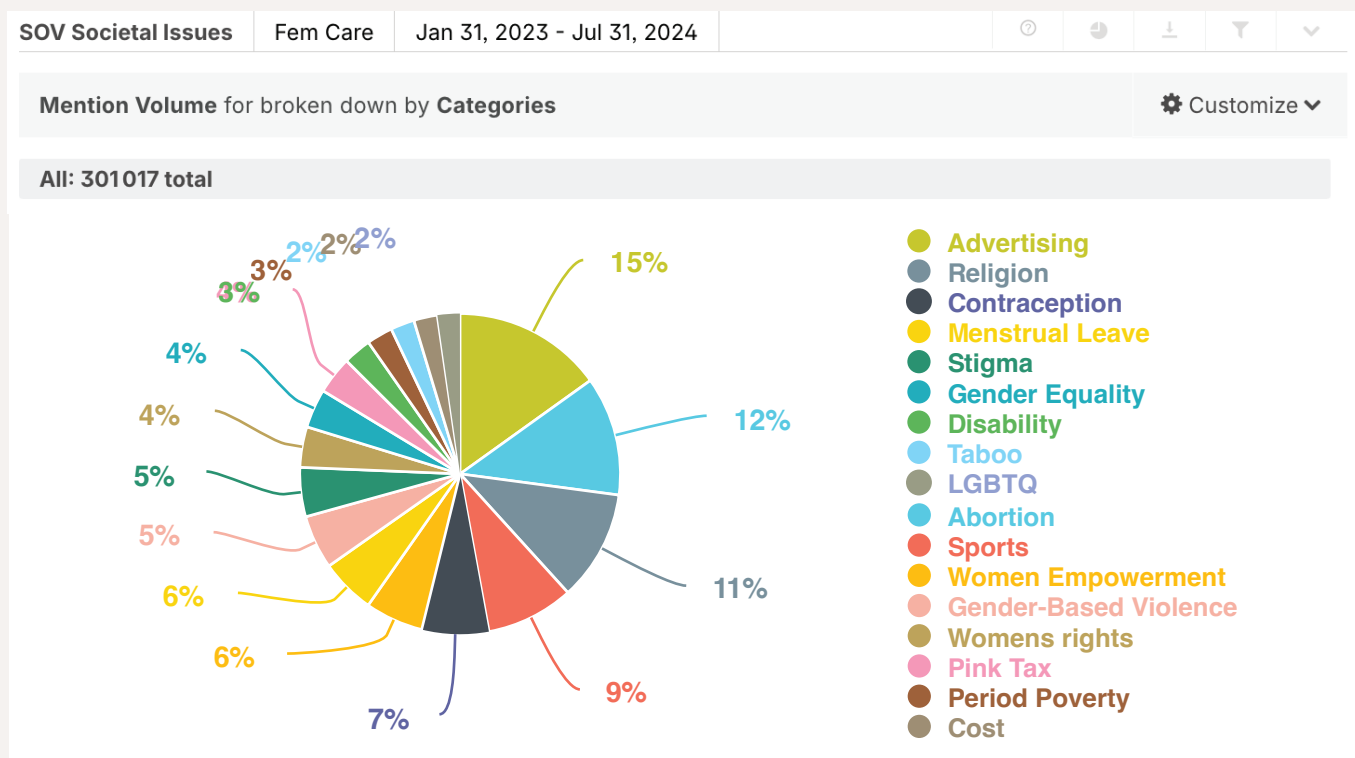
According to studies conducted by The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), long term exposure to Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) - also known as "forever chemicals" which are found in water, day to day products including sanitary pads can cause issues such as **delayed puberty**, decreased fertility, and developmental delays, impacting reproductive health. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is aiming to **ban long-lasting substances** known as PFAS by 2027 starting with a ban in the US.

A study, published in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology, **showed that women in particular** who were more exposed to PFDE, a long-chain PFAS compound, were twice as likely to have a previous melanoma diagnosis.

Another study conducted by researchers from UC San Francisco (UCSF), University of Southern California (USC) and University of Michigan have also found a link between **PFNA and a prior diagnosis of uterine cancer**.

Societal Issues

With 16% of all mentions classified as Societal issues, we identified a few key drivers. Advertising regulations, campaigns and guidelines, abortion, religion, and sports take a majority of the mentions.



Advertising

Campaigns about menstrual health and hygiene tend to peak in the month of May as Menstrual Hygiene Month is often celebrated. We noted campaigns being highlighted right from the grassroots through to conferences targeted at sparking [policy debates](#).

'Pad Girl of Odisha', Payal Patel, was leading the charge for greener menstrual health through the 'Chuppi Todo' campaign around menstruation and providing eco-friendly solutions.

Several successful health campaigns have been implemented to promote women's health, encompassing education, distribution of [sanitary napkins](#), and free health check-ups. Initiatives were taken to address [reproductive rights](#), safe abortions, and equitable access to women's health services.

Additionally, initiatives under the [Menstrual Hygiene Initiative](#) have aimed to raise awareness about proper menstrual hygiene management. According to the FGII Survey, nearly 75 percent of women believe that existing health insurance policies fall short of addressing women-specific needs.

Female empowerment through health has been a focal point, emphasizing nutrition, educational programs, and ensuring [access to menstrual hygiene products](#) and reproductive services, all contributing to empowering women.

Women Empowerment

At a NITI Aayog meeting, discussions centered on health, skill development, [women's empowerment](#), and infrastructure, were all aimed at making India a developed nation by 2047. Former Minister for the Ministry of Women and Child Development – [Smriti Irani](#), addressing an

economic forum, emphasized India's commitment to women's health and dignity through various healthcare programs. [Prime Minister Modi's speech](#) also focused on strategies for women's empowerment, including the provision of toilets, sanitary pads, and advancements in health and sanitation.

Stigma

According to the findings in the NFHS-5 there was a disparity in the menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) index among girls and women across different religious backgrounds in India. [Hindu women for instance exhibited](#) a lower MHH index in comparison to their minority counterparts Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and women from other religions.

Despite the advancement in MHH, it remains a taboo topic shrouded in myths and cultural restrictions such as entry of women into temples during menstruation, and not being allowed to eat preserved food like pickles which indicate instances of [stigma and misconceptions](#) surrounding menstruation, which impact concepts such as shame, purity and sanctity of women.

On the other hand, there are also discussions on the positive front such as a [unique temple in Coimbatore](#) having only female priests, the [Supreme court](#) declaring the custom of prohibiting women in their 'menstruating years' from entering as unconstitutional, indicating that change is underway.

Menstrual Leave

In India, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was submitted to the Supreme court which had aimed to make it mandatory for all states to grant menstrual leaves for female students and working women. This led to an on-going [online discussion](#) around paid menstrual leave as a policy amongst working women, healthcare professionals, and ministers across states since other countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Zambia have incorporated menstrual leave into their employment structures. Experts and several employees [advocated for making paid menstrual leave](#) to be included to address workplace inequities.

[Supreme Court](#) and policymakers examined the need and consequences of providing menstrual pain leave. The Supreme Court is apprehensive about employers shunning women if menstrual leave is made mandatory and has directed the Union government to [frame a model policy](#) on menstrual leaves for women employees after deliberation with states and other parties involved.

NSUI believes in addressing real issues that affect students. The women's manifesto introduces menstrual leave, promoting physical and mental well-being

#NSUIWomenManifesto

#NSUIWomenManifesto

0:15

4 Hitesh Gulla President	1 Abhi Dahiya Vice President	6 Yakshna Sharma Secretary	5 Shubham Kumar Joint Secretary
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3:52 PM · Sep 20, 2023 · 44.6K Views

As more and more women enter the workforce, [boosting employee benefits](#) related to caregiving, including menstrual and maternity leave has benefited several companies that have introduced menstrual leave within the organization.

Several universities across various states such as [Punjab University](#), [Gauhati University](#), and Kerala's universities have made headlines by implementing menstrual leave policies for students.

Former Minister for the Ministry of Women and Child Development – [Smriti Irani](#) voiced [opposition](#) due to concerns about potential discrimination and emphasized that menstruation is a natural part of women's lives.

[Supreme Court](#) disposed of a PIL seeking menstrual leave for women employees and asked the Centre to hold talks with all stakeholders and State governments to decide if a model policy can be framed in this regard. The court made it clear that the consultation process of the Centre will not come in the way of states if they take any steps in this regard.

Meanwhile, [Sikkim High Court](#) introduced a menstrual leave policy for its women employees.

Period Poverty

In India, a lack of awareness regarding menstrual hygiene is a significant barrier. Many women, especially in rural areas, have limited knowledge of proper hygiene practices, the use of sanitary products, and the management of menstrual discomfort. A report by NGO Dasra and USAID revealed that 23 million girls in India drop out of school annually due to a [lack of proper menstrual hygiene](#) management facilities.

Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and Ujjwala Yojana have focused on safeguarding the health of women and reducing dropout rates.



Girls skip [#school](#) upto 60 days during [#menstruation](#) due to lack of sanitation.

[@HumanistNirja](#) says, 'only by supplying pads to schools won't help, unless there is proper management of sanitation & infrastructure of schools should be maintained especially in rural areas'



1:12 PM · Dec 12, 2023 · 7,952 Views



Young girls should not be deprived of an education due to natural bodily functions. Children need to understand that menstruation is normal and they should not feel ashamed to talk about it. 💧

Learn more about how you can help by visiting [cry.org](#).

[#CRYIndia](#)



1:59 PM · Jul 6, 2023 · 67.3K Views

A survey conducted by the NGO Child Rights and You (CRY) revealed that [44.5% of girls](#) were using homemade absorbents or cloth.

While several strides have been taken globally to address these issues, not enough has been done in India, and [pathways to reduce period poverty](#) were highlighted.

The Pink tax

Debates over favorable taxation on products like sanitary napkins and tampons seek to address issues of pricing discrimination.

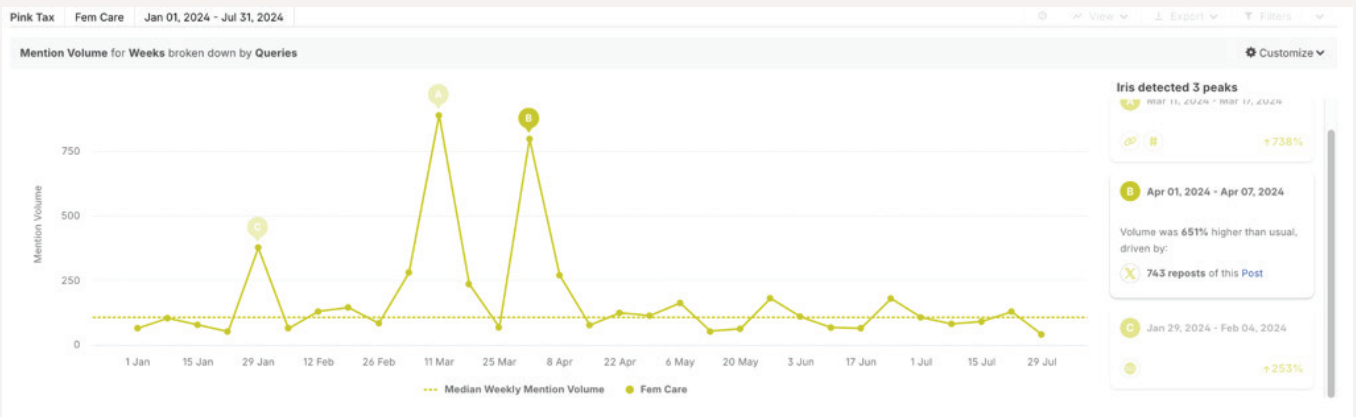


Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw calls #pinktax 'shameful gender bias', asks women to do this

hindustantimes.com/trending/kiran...



10:24 AM · Mar 13, 2024 · 2,283 Views



Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder of Biocon and entrepreneur, urged women to take action against discriminatory pricing. The Pink Tax refers to the inflated cost of goods marketed to women, highlighting a critical aspect of gender inequality.

Government Initiatives and Policies

Out of all the mentions, almost 10% of all mentions were around critical policy and legislative issues around menstruation. Interestingly, the conversations around abortion and women's rights in the US were also widely reported in the media with several people commenting on the developments in Dobbs vs Jacksons Women's Health (which overturned the former Roe vs Wade ruling that granted women's fundamental right to abortions).

We clustered some of the critical themes into this category to investigate the development of some of these themes.



D

The [Supreme Court](#) directs all States & UTs to submit their responses to UOI in the matter if not done already.

F

[National Students Union of India](#) voicing their manifesto towards improving the health of women.

B

Menstrual leave will put female employees at a great disadvantage vis a vis a male employee in the recruitment process.

A

[Pink Tax issue](#) in March 2024.

G

[Menstrual Hygiene Day](#) conversations.

The fundamental right to life and personal liberty (Article 21) includes a woman's ability to make decisions about her own body, including reproductive options. The Indian Supreme Court has construed it to include the right to obtain safe and authorized abortion services.

[LiveLaw covered aspects](#) of legislation that will come into consideration with the evolution of technology. Reproductive Healthcare is now influenced by Artificial Intelligence, Genomic technologies, IVF, Wearable Tech, 3D Printing, but the regulatory environment has not specifically addressed these.

The National Commission of Women introduced '[Her Legal Right](#),' a mobile application designed to educate women on critical legal aspects: marriage rights, reproductive rights, combating sexual offenses, and constitutional provisions for women.

Maternal health initiatives, including programs for [breast cancer screenings](#) and [safe motherhood](#) efforts, are making strides in improving women's health.

Various organizations and government schemes focus on raising awareness about pregnant women's health risks, period health, and breast cancer screenings.

The healthcare sector faces challenges such as weak regulatory controls and high-cost private hospital visits. To address these, insurance regulators urge companies to [expand health coverage](#) across all age groups and medical conditions.

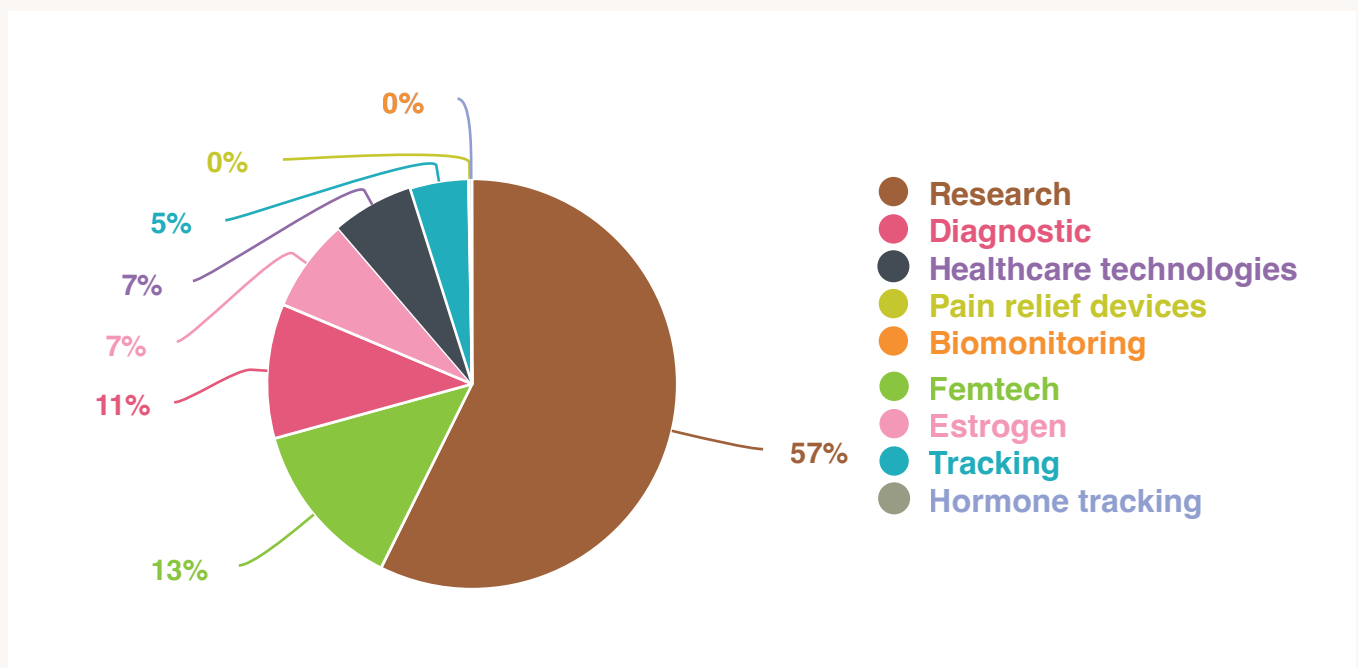
[Efforts by the government](#) and private insurers, supported by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, aim to enhance healthcare access for women. Additionally, regulatory measures target social media accountability for [mental well-being](#), while surrogacy laws strive to balance regulation, reproductive rights, and ethical considerations in [family planning](#).

Studies have found that women pay, on average, [7% more](#) for products marketed to them, with the difference rising to 13% for personal items. This disparity isn't limited to physical goods; it extends to services like haircuts and financial products like loans and insurance, where women often face [higher premiums](#) regardless of their risk profiles.

A [national-level menstrual hygiene policy](#) has been formulated that seeks to break the stigma around menstruation, ensure access to period products and toilet facilities, empower women and girls, promote health and sustainability, and fulfill international commitments to gender equality and women's well-being.

Girl students should be allowed to take necessary [restroom breaks during board exams for classes 10 and 12](#) and free sanitary napkins must be made available at all examination centres, the Ministry of Education said in an advisory to schools.

Technology



Among all the references, 9% pertain to technology. Prominent subjects like research, femtech, and diagnostics have garnered a significant portion of these mentions.

Recent initiatives, such as collaborations between the National Science Foundation and the Department of Health and Human Services to [explore AI applications](#) in women's health, highlight the efforts to bridge this gap.

Research and FemTech

Women's health research is a critical yet underfunded area, leading to disparities in health outcomes compared to men. A critical theme where we need to address the issues of the under-representation of women and the gender health gap, especially in research and funding has emerged.

In this space, the launch of [Ayush-ICMR at AIIMS](#) with a primary focus area on Women & Child Health has had a few mentions.

The FemTech industry is rapidly expanding to address gender-specific healthcare needs, though challenges like privacy and safety concerns persist. Innovations in healthcare, including [digital biomarkers](#) and advancements in fertility treatments like IVF, are reshaping women's health. From menstrual health awareness to advancements in contraceptive technologies and [menopausal relief options](#), there is a growing focus on personalized health insights and the development of female-centric health technologies worldwide. Revolutionary devices such as [Maitri](#), and studies talking about hormone tracking and biomonitoring are also recent developments in technology to enhance women's health.

Research from the University of California, Berkeley highlighted the presence of [toxic metals in tampons](#), posing health risks to women. This study underscores the importance of ensuring the safety and quality of menstrual hygiene products for women's health.

Diagnostic and Healthcare Technologies

A transformative shift has taken place amongst nearly 50% of Indian women towards their own preventive and diagnostic healthcare. Measures like [laparotomy or laparoscopy](#) have come up which improve the quality of life for women while maintaining fertility and reproductive options. A significant growth in the [gynecological devices market](#) is also predicted due to the ongoing technological advancements and increasing focus on research and development. References to health insurance, collaborative efforts between healthcare professionals, NGOs, and civil society, and the importance of funding for diagnosis and treatment are prominent recurring themes in the headlines.

According to a report by Frost & Sullivan, the [femtech market in India](#) is expected to reach \$310 million by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 16.4%. Investing in femtech comes with its own set of challenges - social stigma, regulatory barriers, and lack of awareness among consumers.

Methodology

The report examines conversations between January 2023 -July 31, 2024 (except where explicitly stated otherwise) on menstrual health in India. The language is predominantly English. We have clustered the topics on emerging themes and categories based on the agreement and key agenda of the conference.

The insights are meant to be directional vectors and not representative of the exact number of mentions in the online media landscape.



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